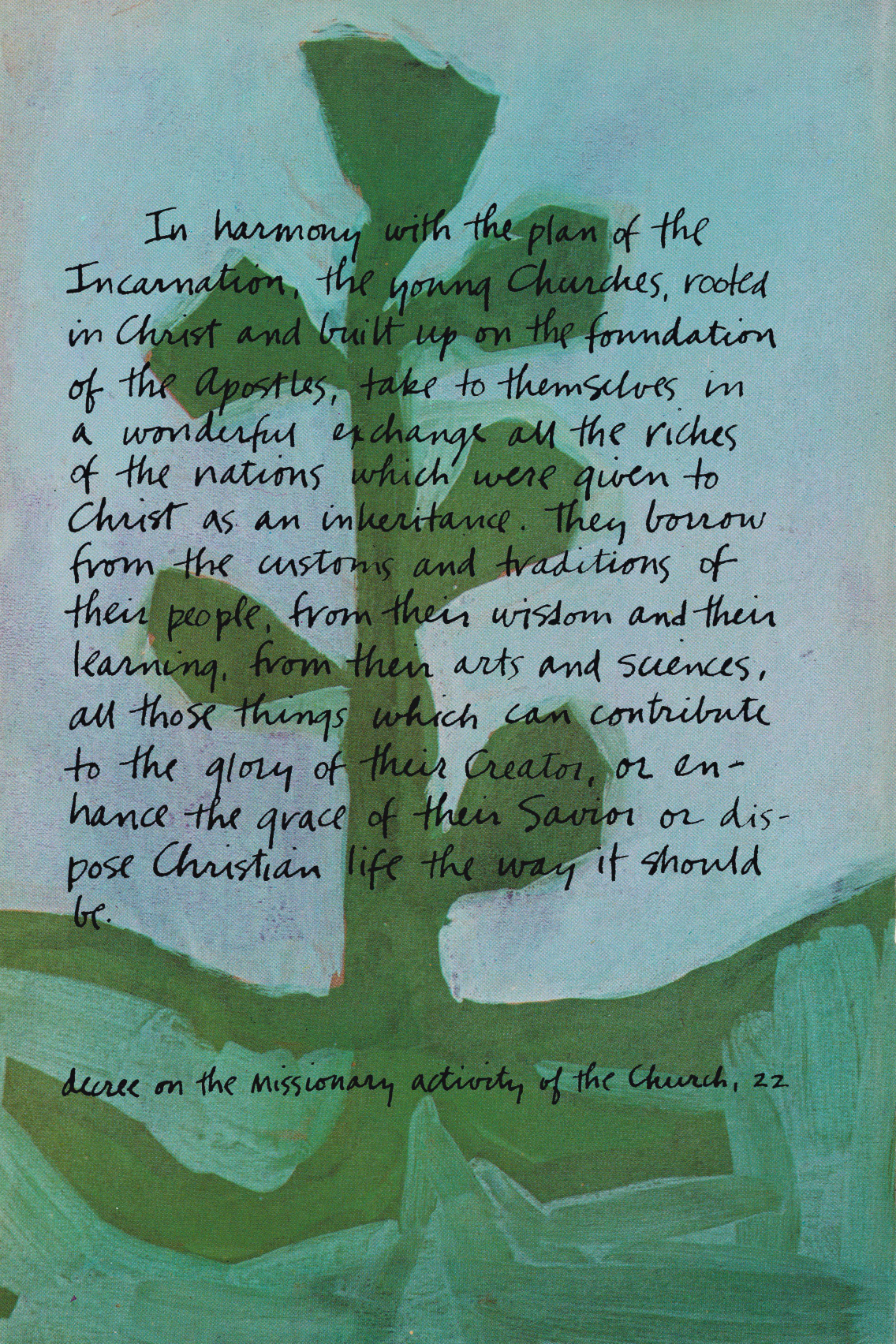
medical missionary

NO. 2
1968



In harmony with the plan of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance. They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, or enhance the grace of their Savior or dispose Christian life the way it should be.

decree on the Missionary activity of the Church, 22

medical missionary

VOLUME 42 • NUMBER 2 • 1968

WOMEN

• A New World p. 34

• A New Way p. 48

• A New Vessel p. 60

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a NEW WORLD

women

of every stature, every race and nationality, every culture and intelligence, living and dying, struggling and hoping, loving and hating, achieving and failing, but ever growing toward personhood, a vast multitude called to a special unity, to a new destiny: it is women with a purpose that we *expect* today. More and more roles are opening to this vast multitude, roles that demand competence, a sense of direction and vision, roles that are functions of service within a society. Woman's role as mother, with its qualities of gift, fidelity, warmth, concern, her primary role of past centuries, has prepared her for today's wider concept of service, for nation building as nurse, teacher, social worker, doctor. Reflecting the state of the developing, transitional society in which she aspires to find her place, woman today is in a state of transition. She seeks for freedom to become, an opportunity to be, the luxury of choice. With choice comes the challenge of decision. It is not easy to choose. It is not easy to become. The world we live in calls for women of steel that can bend a little, women of strength that know how to laugh and be loved, women with a purpose.

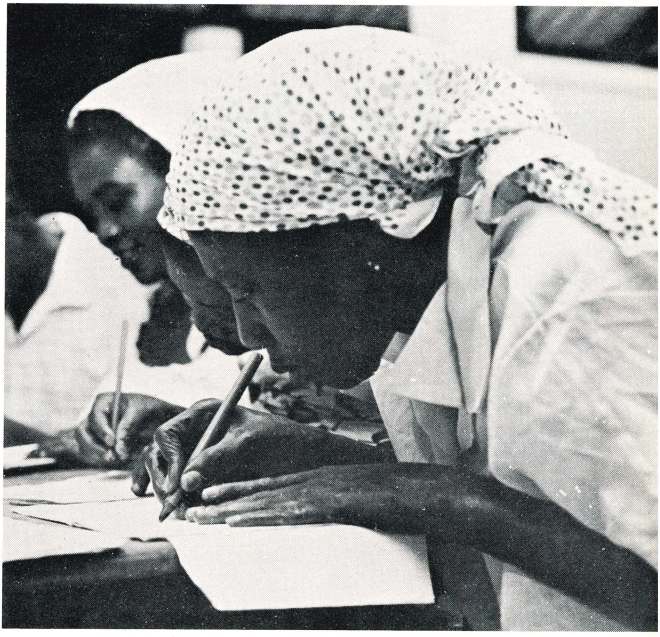
GHANA

Life for the women of Ghana today is varied. Education has opened vast horizons for them in the home and in the community.

Many are city women now: doctors, teachers, beauty parlor operators, bank clerks and secretaries. Some women even own stores or fleets of lorries. Many more women are returning each year from abroad with newly acquired diplomas in the fields of medicine, nutrition, law, teaching, nursing, arts and community development to contribute to the progress of the country. Even after marriage and children, a woman will continue her studies. Education means comparable status with her husband. It demands an independence from parents and offers an opportunity of sharing with her husband a new way of life.

Of course, the traditional village woman can still be found. She rises at 4:00 a.m. and walks five to six miles down the dusty road to the farm. She clears the land, plants the yams, peppers, beans and peanuts, and carries firewood home at the end of the day. In the evenings, after fetching water, bathing the children, cooking the supper and cleaning the compound, these village women gather to learn to read and write. Some of them teach sewing to groups of young girls. Together they make dresses, shifts, blouses and baby clothes to sell in the market.

Slowly the gap between the city and village is disappearing. Today, the villager gazes in admiration and awe at the education and the fashion sense of her "city sister." Very soon, even tomorrow, the village woman will set her own standards—with style.



PAKISTAN

The Prophet Mohammed decreed that women should be veiled. In the sub-continent of India and Pakistan, this precept has meant that a Muslim woman wears a tent-like *burkah* whenever she goes outside her own home, so that no strange man ever sees her face. In recent years, *burkahs* have become briefer and more attractive, and many among the educated no longer wear them.

The "dropping of the veil" symbolizes the changing position of women in Pakistan. The young are usually the first to take the step. Two factors which have hastened the change are the expanding industrialization of the country and the increased higher education, especially on the university level. Pakistani women are becoming teachers, doctors, and lawyers. They are uniting with one another for further development through professional organizations. The efforts of the All-Pakistan Women's Association brought about the passage of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance in 1961. This Bill of Rights for women made it difficult for a Pakistani to take more than one wife, raised the marriage age for girls from 12 to 16, and regularized the procedure of divorce so as to give more rights to the wife.

Today, the challenge before the Pakistani woman is to harmonize her opportunities for education and public service with older values of home and family to bring forth a 20th-century way of life to share with her family and her country.

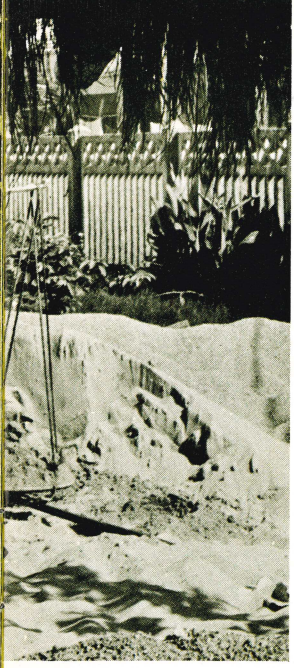
A General
Textbook of
NURSING
16th Edition

VIETNAM

Bamboo reeds bend gracefully toward the river, never breaking, even in a storm. The Vietnamese symbol of strength and courage, these gentle reeds bear a likeness to the woman of Vietnam.

Although born into a family who loves her, she does not really belong to it, for she will become part of the family of her husband when she marries. The Vietnamese woman learns early to subordinate her own interests to those of others. She learns in the home of her father to love and obey him, to sacrifice much by caring for her young brothers, to assume household duties by helping her mother. In marriage her filial obedience is transferred to her husband, and the love and concern for her brothers is given to her own children, who hopefully will be sons to carry on the family lineage.

During her married life or in widowhood she is often seen selling in the market, managing a shop, doing manual labor, or planting the rice. In the many trials that face her, she asks Buddha, or the guardian spirit, or perhaps Christ—depending upon her religion—to come to her help. She has responded to the war courageously, comforting her family. She accepts death as part of everyday life, a mystery she does not understand. In the face of all vicissitudes — war, hunger, suffering, disease, death — she has remained supple, bending as the reed and not breaking.



AL DETERMINED
PEOPLE OF
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EXPRESS
AID
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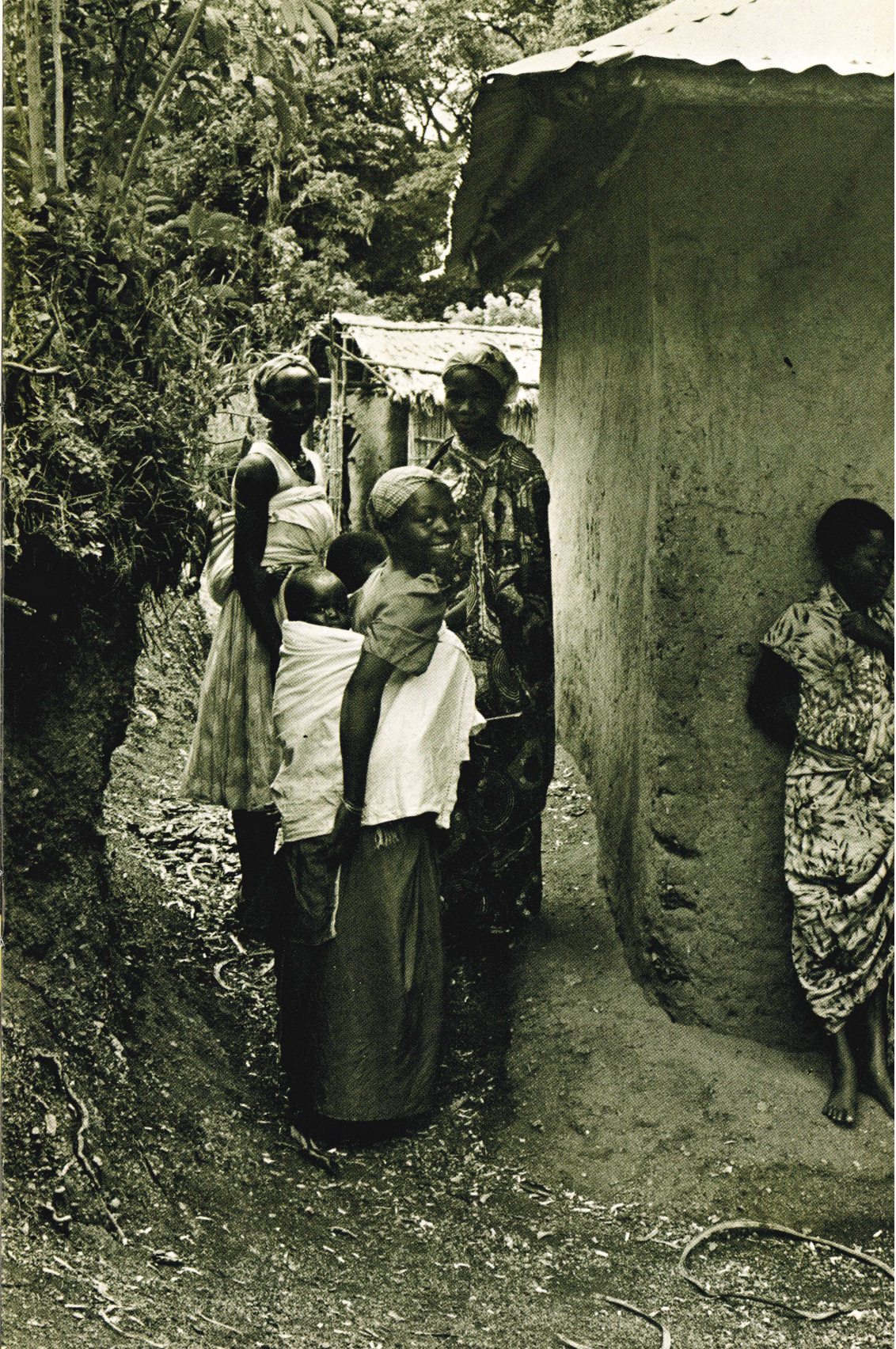
UGANDA

My name is Bonabana. It means, "they are all children."

In telling you my name, I am telling you much of myself, much of my people. I am a Mutooro. My people live in the western part of Uganda. Like all Batooro, my parents consider children a blessing. I was given a loving welcome into the family. Still, my parents were disappointed. They already had five girls and had hoped so much that I would be the long-awaited son. There was not much discussion when the family gathered for my name-giving ceremony. All agreed that I should be called Bonabana . . . "they are all children."

"We had hoped for a boy to carry on the clan." These are the words of my father. "When Bonabana marries, her children, according to our custom, will be members of her husband's clan. Our line will stop here."

"Yet she is strong and healthy," insists my mother. "She will be able to help her mother fetch water and collect the firewood. She and her sisters can share the tasks of cooking and keeping house. She will be able to work on the farm. She is pretty and intelligent too. Her father will be able to ask a good dowry or 'bride-price' for her. And . . . 'they are all children!' "



VENEZUELA

The average Venezuelan woman casts a clear glance into the future. It is true that she spends hours washing and ironing, or dries coffee beans on the hardpacked earth in the Andes, or sells fresh fish in a coastal city, or grinds corn for *arepas* (fried cornmeal patties) to be sold by her children in the dusty village or busy city streets. Yet this same woman envisions a dignified life of intellectual and economic freedom and vigor for coming generations. Planted on the earth of century-old traditions and engaged by hard labor, she earns the education which will make her vision a reality for her children. Her role is to act as the catalyst for change in her country.

Many of the more fortunate women who have come from families of better means are already concretizing this dream. For years a few women have been dedicated teachers, nurses, and Church workers. Their numbers are increasing and they are gradually becoming more effective in group efforts.

The future is bright for Venezuela because the women of the fields, barrios and villages are spending themselves to secure its potential for their children.

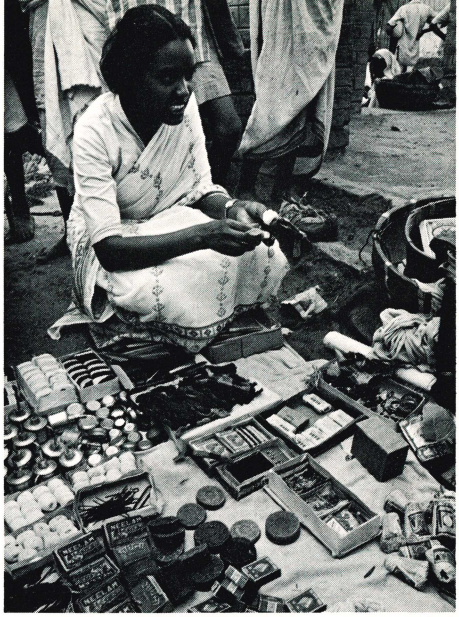
INDIA

"If you study history," Indira Gandhi once said, "you will find that where women have risen, that country attained a high position; and wherever they remained dormant, that country slipped back."

The women of India have a responsibility to build their country. As it is, India has more women in government posts than any other nation. Prime Minister Nehru was chiefly responsible for securing for them equality before the law, the privilege of voting, and the opportunity to hold public office.

"The desire for change is in her," he said of a typical Indian college girl, "and it is very important that society sanction the change and make it respectable."

The impetus for this transition period arises in the heart of the Indian woman herself. She desires to create something for others as well as a family for herself. Medicine, law, nursing, teaching, business, politics and social service have become areas of opportunity for her creativity. With proper education and sufficient time to assimilate it, she will contribute significantly to the progress of the nation.



A NEW WAY

Like Daniel of Old Testament times, religious women of today are full of desires. Pope John's now famous "breath of fresh air" has blown into Sisters' congregations around the world bringing with it the spirit of Vatican II.

Slowly but systematically, the special Chapter meetings which all religious communities are required to have are serving to bring the aims, aspirations and theology of the Second Vatican Council into every congregation. The results of these meetings have enkindled enthusiasm, helped groups to recapture their youth and vitality and sent them searching for authentic new forms of life and service. Sisters have begun to be on real speaking terms with the world. They are developing a new closeness to the realities of life, a new awareness of human values. They are tackling problems head on: for example, the problem of freedom and authority, the tension between personal fulfillment and community, the problems involved in the shifting of emphasis in their apostolates and many other of the vexing and perplexing questions of our times.

Many religious communities have gained a certain dynamism and become transformed into something new as founders' ideals and old traditions are wedded to the values of our atomic age.

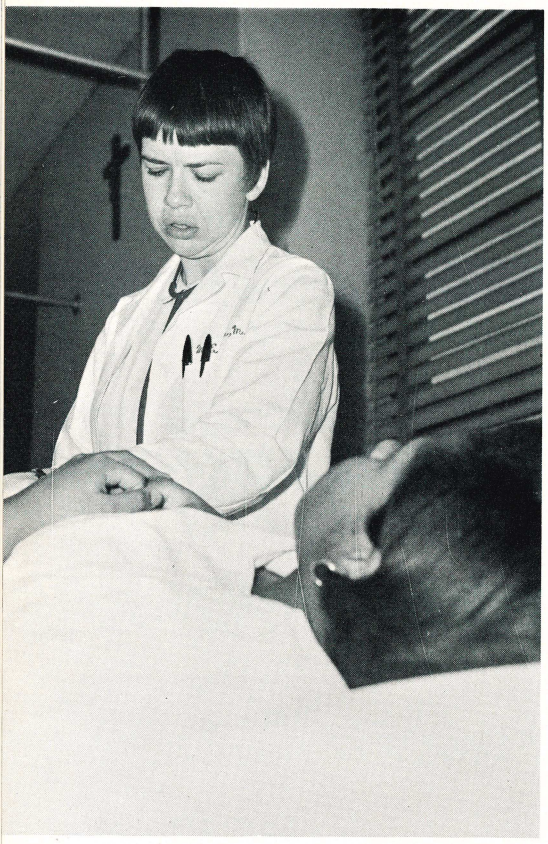
Concerned about following Christ and the spirit of His Gospel, strongly aware of their own solidarity in community, Sisters wish to make a total commitment of themselves to others in love and service. They are aware that they are personally called by God to a huge task that is beyond their own unaided strength. They wish to become a vital and creative presence of Christ in the world. To do this, they count on being formed by Christ's Word, being fed by His Sacrament and animated by His Spirit, living to the full in the here and now, building His Kingdom on earth, certain of its fullness in the future. They are women involved in the joys and sorrows of men, anxious for man's development, caring enough to give a life for this cause.

For Medical Mission Sisters this means encounter with a variety of cultures and love for men of many colors and creeds and countries of this world. It means translating this love into service for the sick.

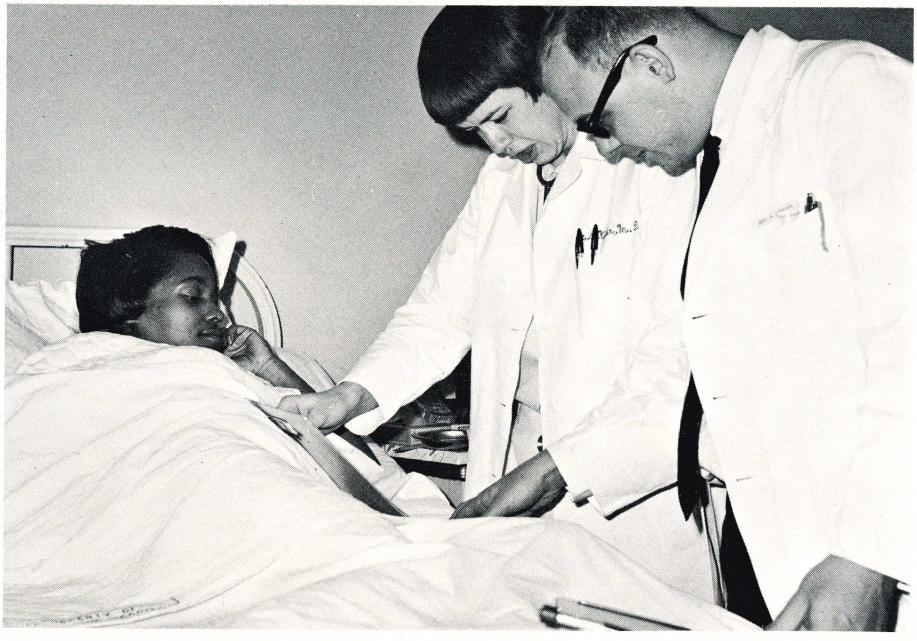
The 26 Medical Mission Sisters who met in Rome last October for our Chapter meeting gave the Society a blueprint. It provides for a re-evaluation of the value of our medical mission apostolate, the updating of our missionary "philosophy," provision for experimentation in our medical work, changes in governmental structure, a new program of formation and a strong emphasis on an evangelical style of life.

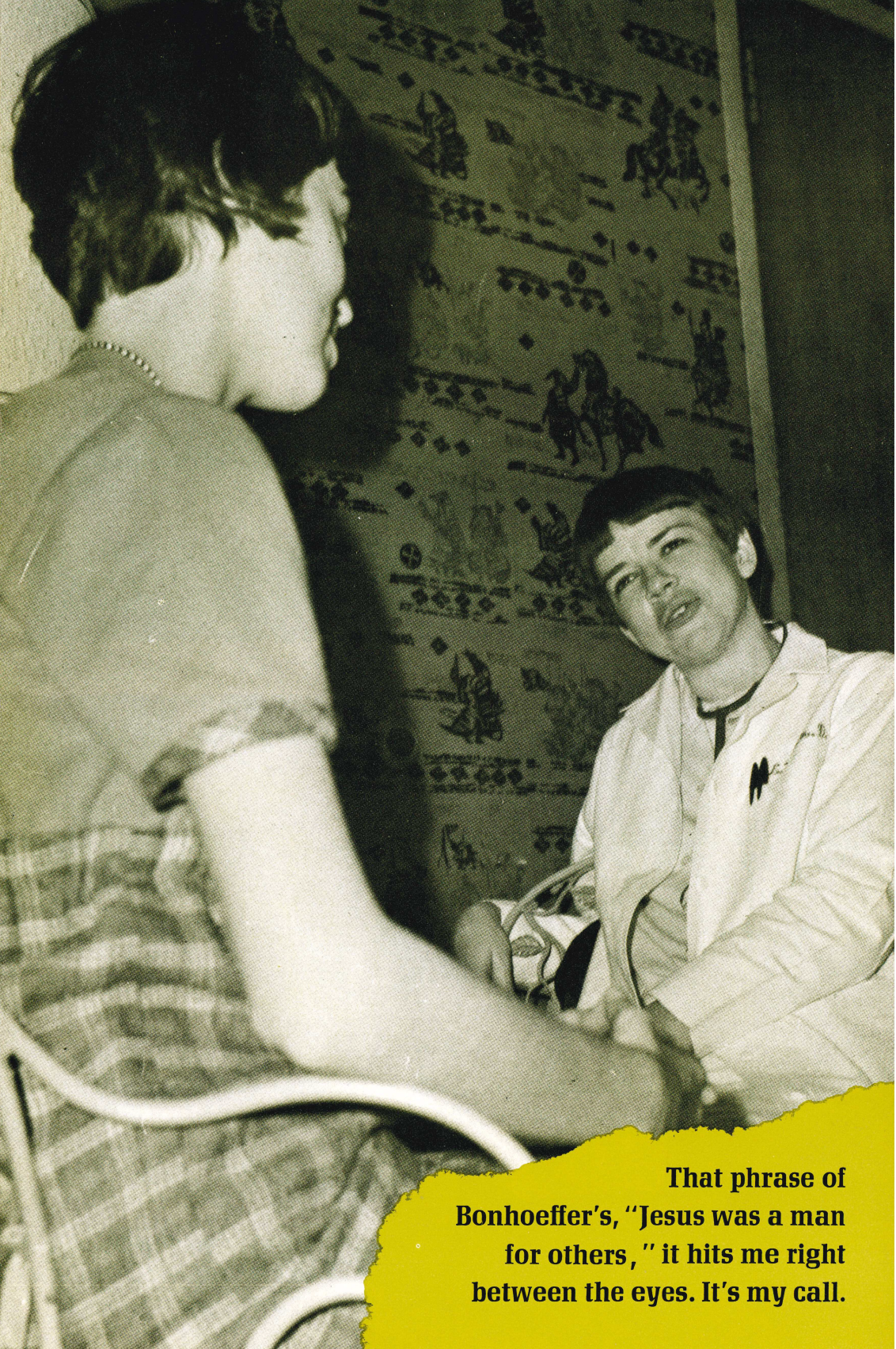
At the present time Medical Mission Sisters the world over are concerned about carrying out this blueprint for renewal. They, too, are women of desire and their aim is to be ready for a moment-to-moment response to God's presence in the world. Theirs is the challenge of exploration. Building on the foundations of their Society's 43-year history, the Medical Mission Sisters of 1968 are anxious to be alive to the new dimensions in their medical missionary vocation — always, always with the thought of investing a lifetime of loving and joyful service to the sick.

Theology today sees the Christian vocation as "presence". . . .

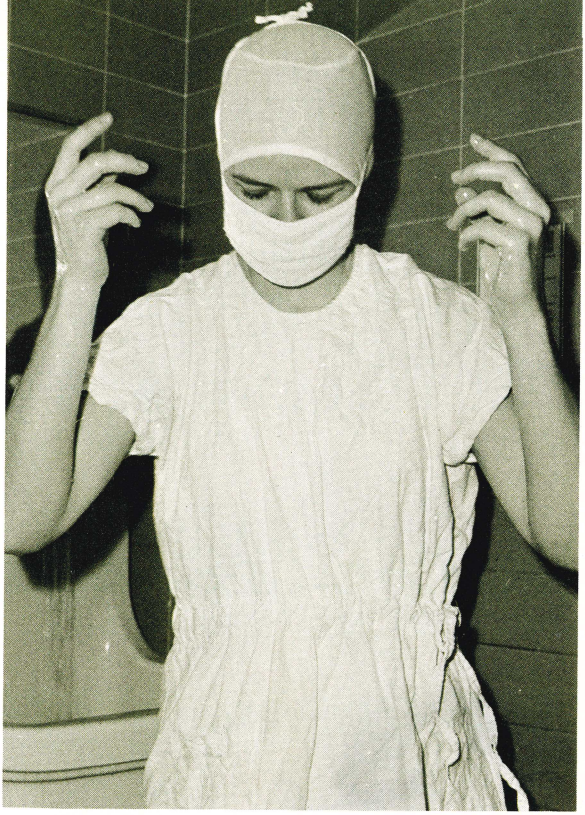


. . . . a central redemptive
position in the
midst of man
suffering,
waiting, wanting.

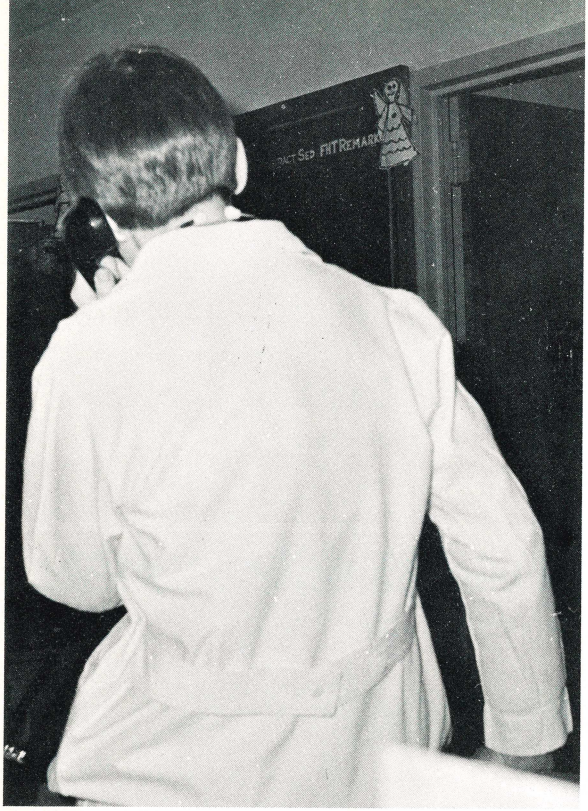




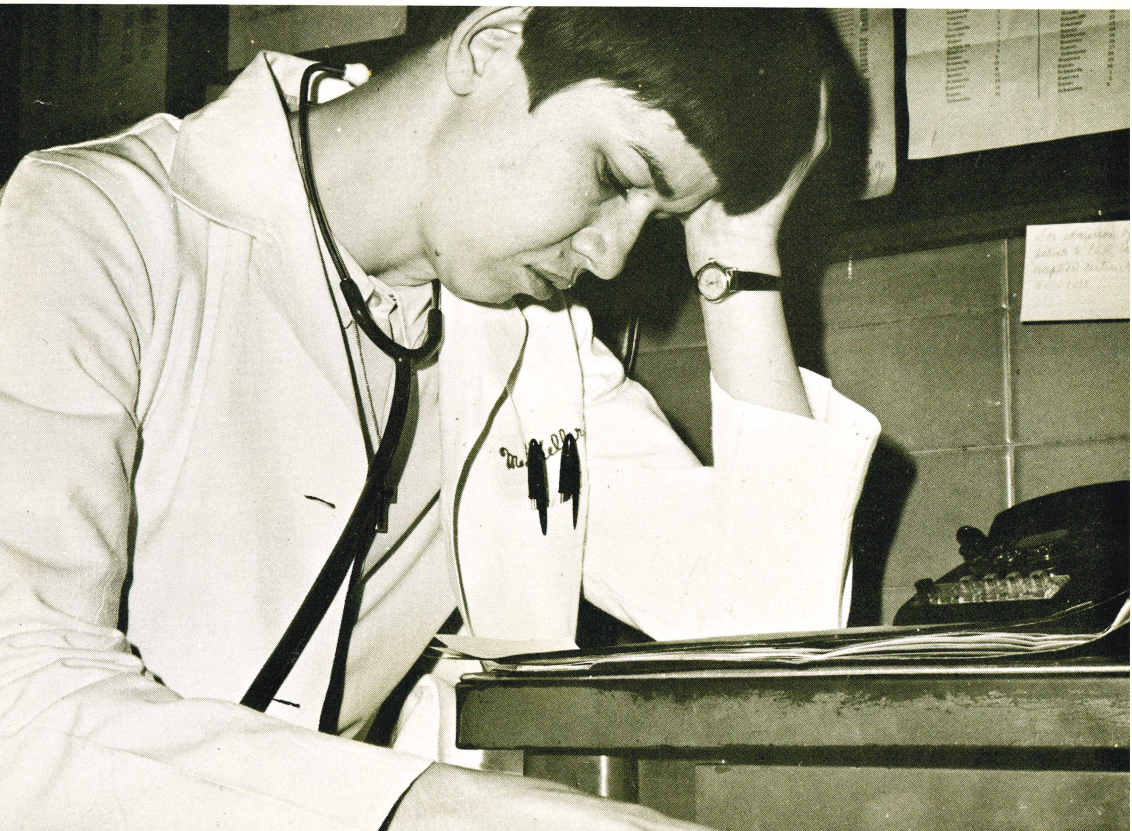
That phrase of Bonhoeffer's, "Jesus was a man for others," it hits me right between the eyes. It's my call.

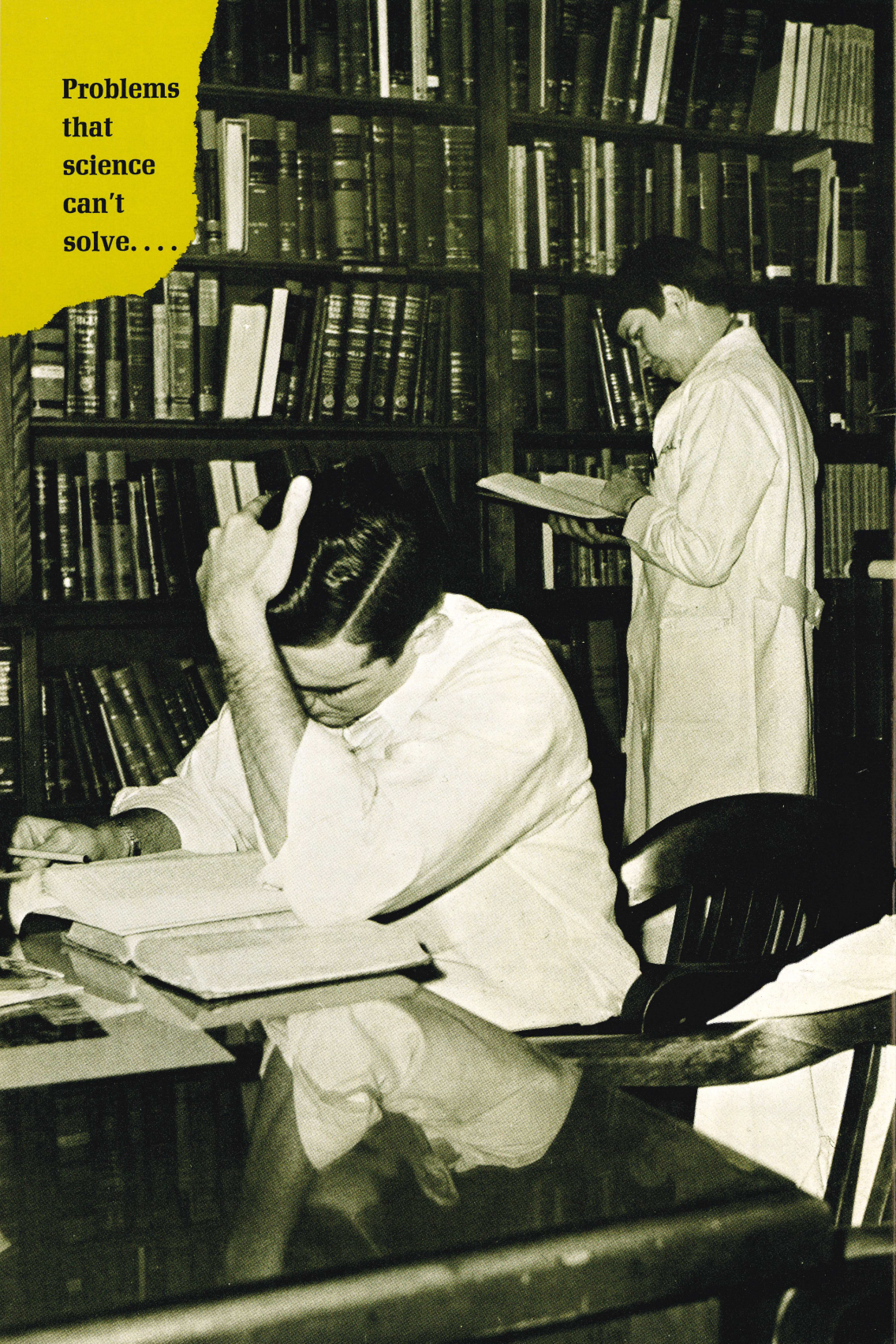


Christ-love means others.
Hard work.

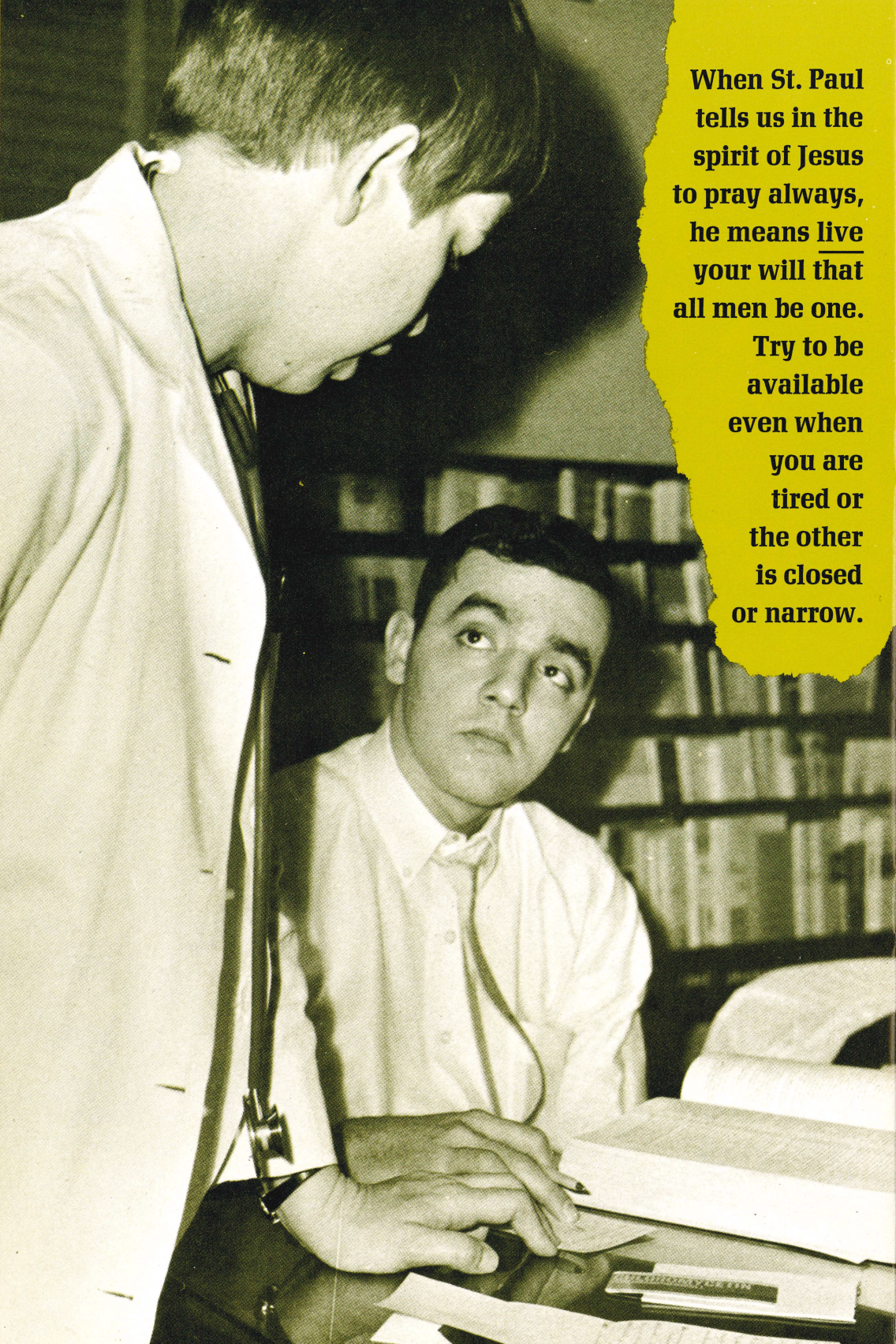


Long hours.

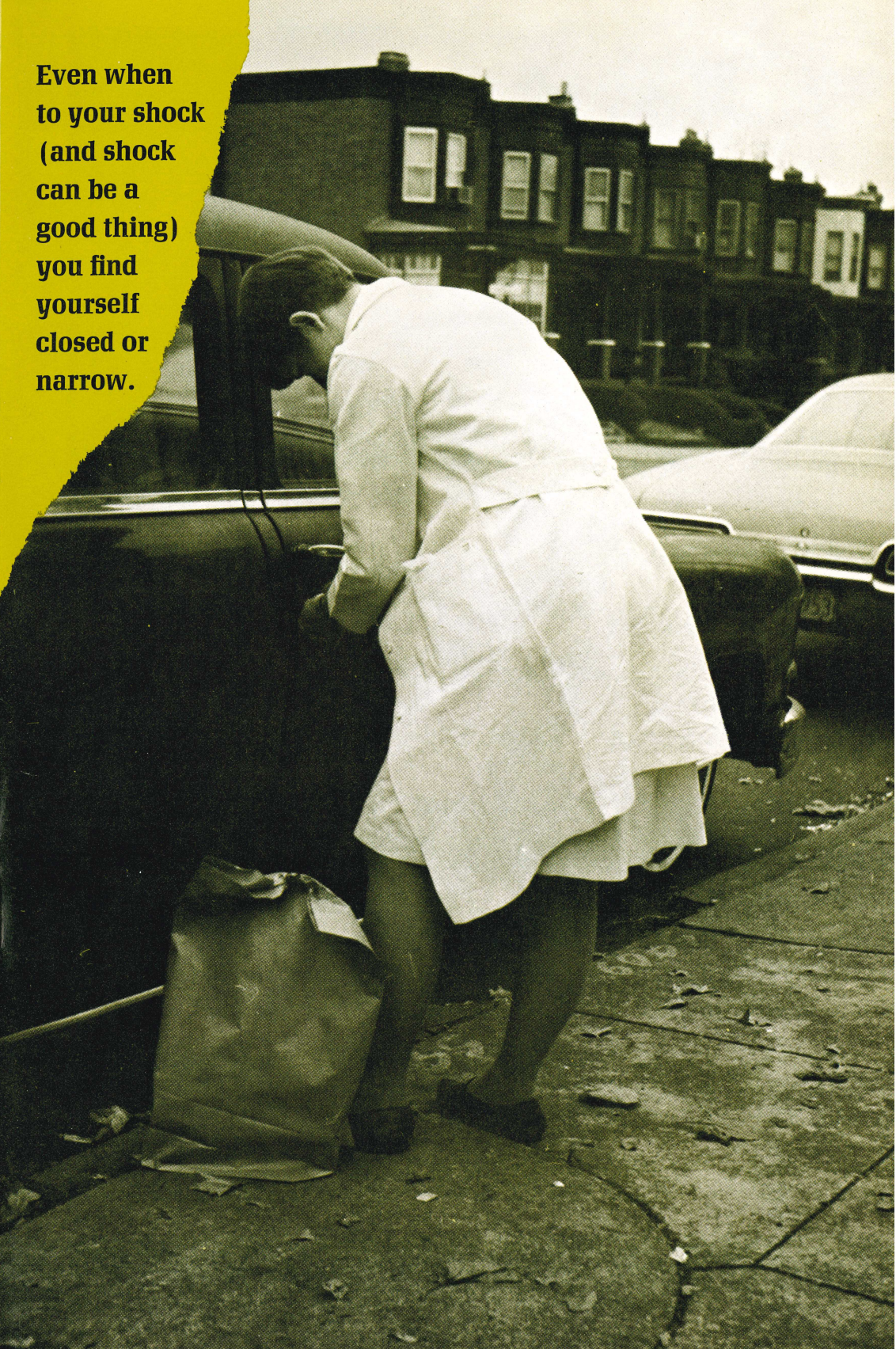



Problems
that
science
can't
solve. . . .

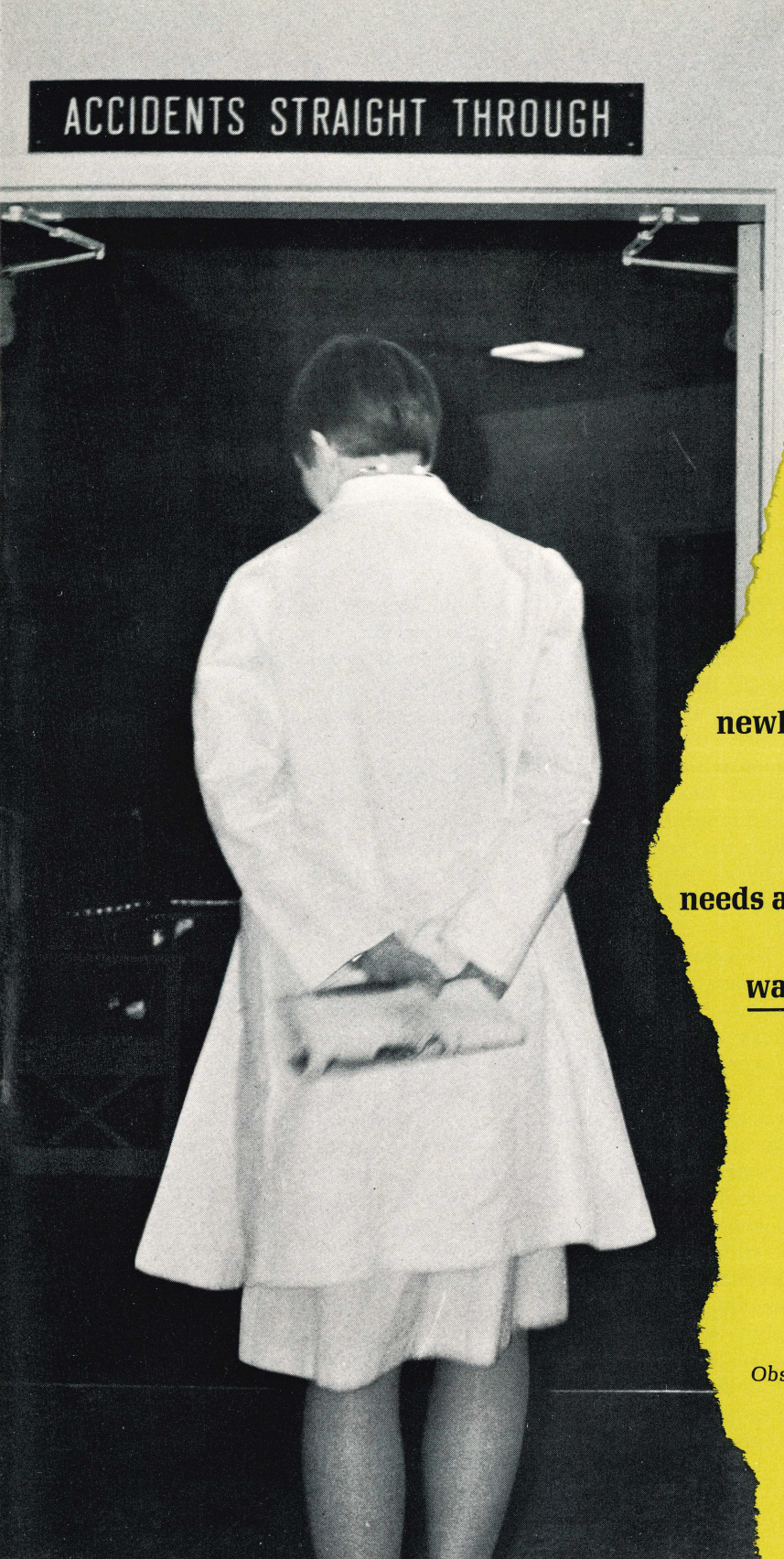
and genuine
love can
only ease,
not erase.



When St. Paul tells us in the spirit of Jesus to pray always, he means live your will that all men be one. Try to be available even when you are tired or the other is closed or narrow.


Even when
to your shock
(and shock
can be a
good thing)
you find
yourself
closed or
narrow.

With Christ all effort was other-oriented.
All life was gift. A thing to be shared.
All giving succulent with joy. What does Browning say?
"Red-ripe at the marrow of the bone
there where life is sweetest."



I know my life isn't going to be easy. I don't want it to be that way. A doctor in newly-developing countries is really eaten up by others' needs and demands. The veterans warn me . . . yet it's my call. I'm anxious to begin.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Keller, M.D., is completing a residency in Obstetrics-Gynecology at Misericordia Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A NEW VESSEL

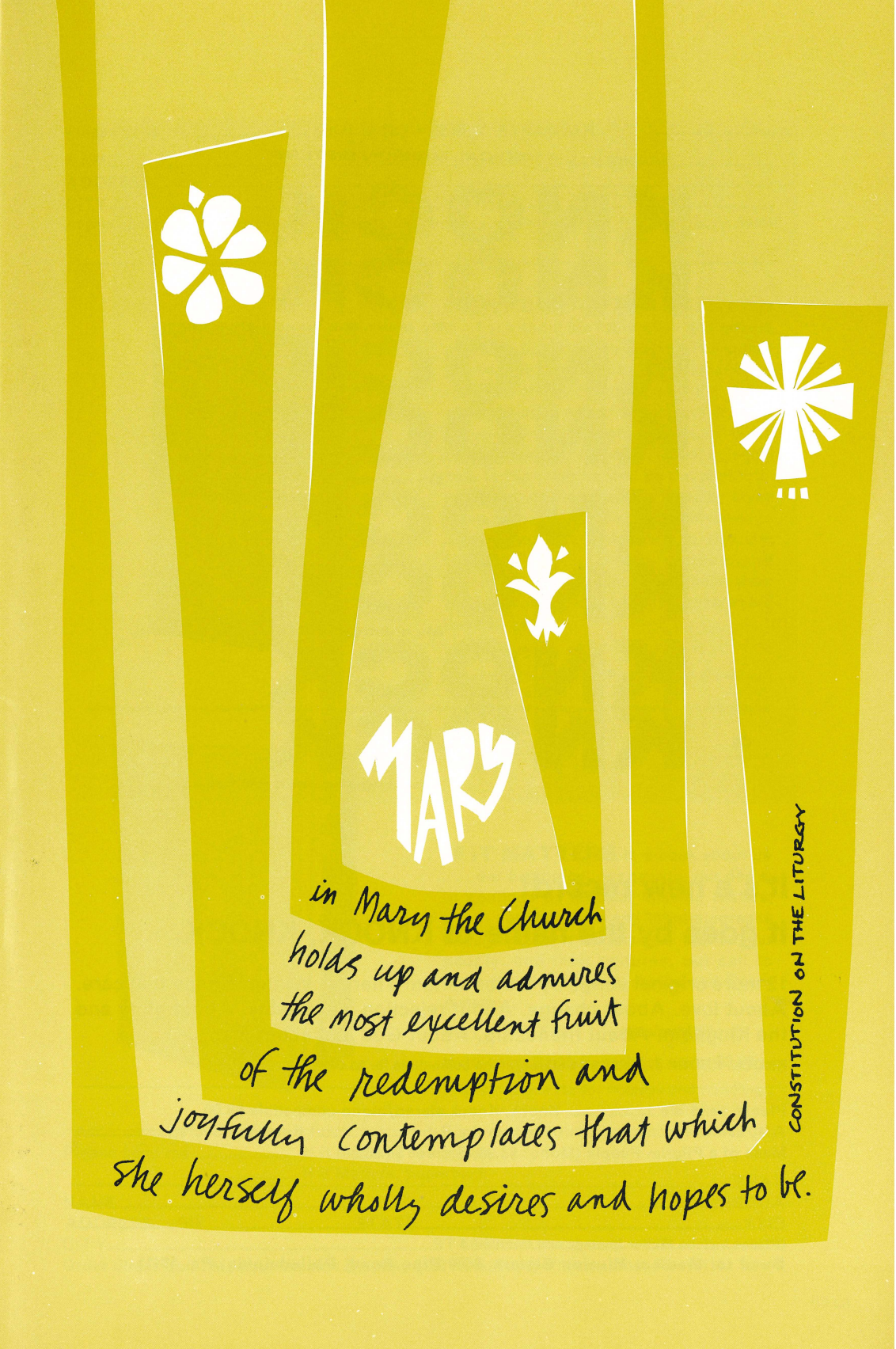
By Sister Kristine Malins

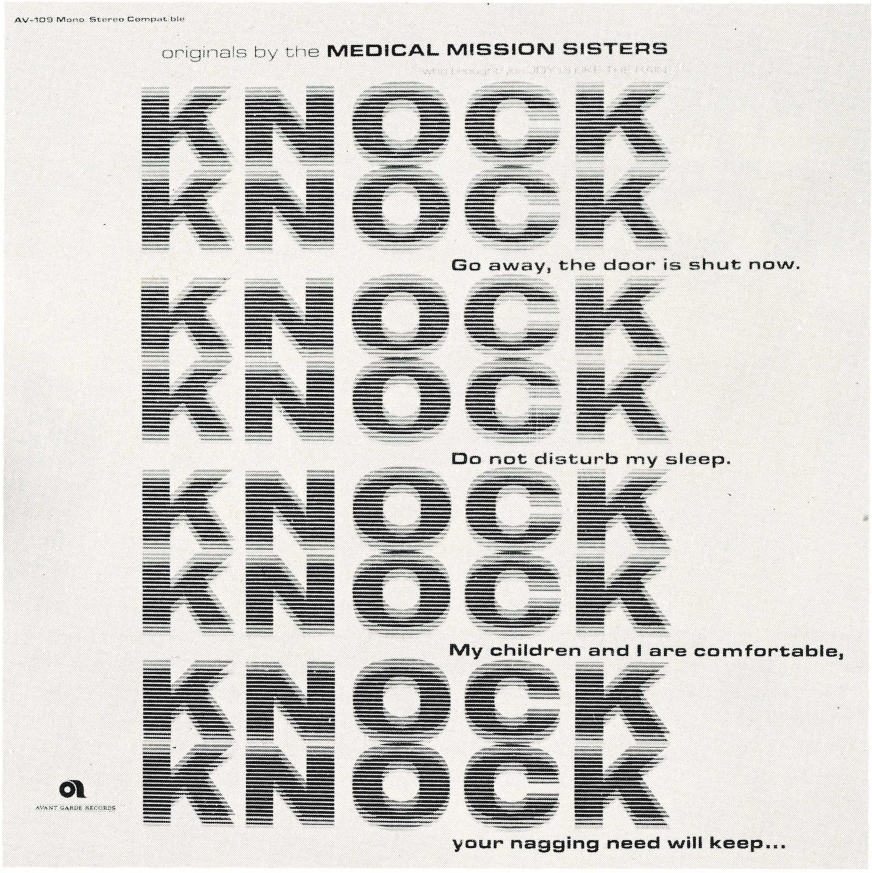
The town knew her as a "bad woman" and had little to do with her. Today some confuse her with the woman of Magdala possessed by seven devils or the sister of Martha and Lazarus of Bethany. St. Luke records her simply as a penitent who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Only Jesus perceived her true identity when He countered the Pharisee's judgment with the words: "Simon, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven; for she has shown me so much love."

Forgiven because she loved so much . . . her tears and her hair and an alabaster flask of perfume—such precious things to a woman—were the tangible expression of her change of heart. So urgently did she desire to set herself aright with this man that her eagerness cast out all fear. She dared entrance into Simon's house and risked the contempt and scorn of the whole party. Intuitively, her restless, searching heart sensed in Jesus one who would at last love her for herself, one whose love would somehow restore her dignity and value. Jesus did not disappoint her. "It is your faith that has saved you. Go in Peace." (Lk. 7, 36; 8, 3)

One wonders where the woman went with the peace the Lord had given her. The captivations of the old familiarities had been shattered at His feet in her broken alabaster. She had to form a new vessel from her tears to hold not some liquid fragrance or an empty loveliness, but this faith-begotten peace. Perhaps she helped Joanna, the wife of Chuza, and Suzanna and the many other women St. Luke mentions who looked after Jesus' comfort from their own resources. Possibly, she left that town and began her life afresh in some other place or returned to a waiting family to rebuild its broken bonds. Most probably, she learned to share her peace, to speak with others about its source . . . those quiet words, "Your sins are forgiven."

Can we fail to find ourselves in this repentant woman? We, too, are sinners. We, also, seek in many persons and places a love that gives us dignity and worth, that roots us in the depth of our being. Will we do as well as she? Can our hearts lay bare our longing at the feet of Jesus and our ears catch His words of forgiveness? Have we the courage to take His peace and make it grow for one another? For us, too, it is our faith that will save us.


MARY
in Mary the Church
holds up and admires
the most excellent fruit
of the redemption and
joyfully contemplates that which
she herself wholly desires and hopes to be.
CONSTITUTION ON THE LITURGY



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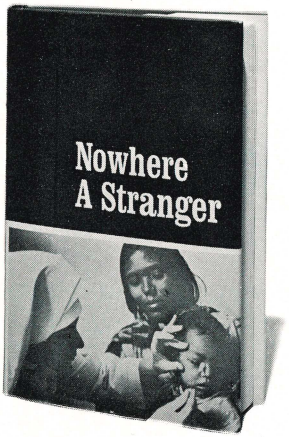

NOWHERE A STRANGER—This is a book about the foundation and growth of the Medical Mission Sisters. The author travelled 40,000 miles to see firsthand the wonders of the countries and the needs of the peoples whom the community now serves. Mr. Long points out that these Sisters play no favorites, offering equal help to the great as well as the destitute. He describes the obstacles faced by these women who have dedicated themselves to serving the sick and dying in Uganda, Ghana, Pakistan, India, Vietnam and Venezuela. The Sisters find themselves nowhere strangers, because everywhere there is need.

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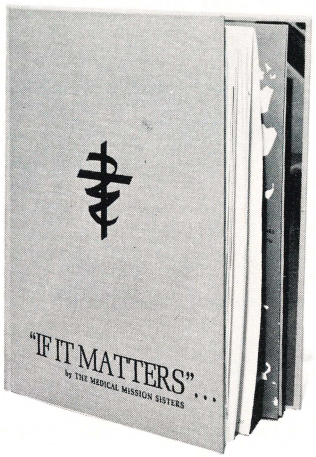

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COVER PHOTO:
River scene, Thuruthipuram, South India.

Wherever you go I will go, wherever you live I will live. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16)